

# DASP Digest



US Forest Service International Programs  
Disaster Assistance Support Program

October 2006 Volume 1, Issue 4

## Highlights

West Africa Mission  
Preparedness Training.

Draft RMT Policy  
completed and circulated  
for staff review.

*DASP Digest is a quarterly report produced by the Disaster Assistance Support Program (DASP), a partnership between the U.S. Forest Service International Programs and USAID's Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance. For more information please visit our website at [www.fs.fed.us/global](http://www.fs.fed.us/global).*



## Contents

DART Board	2
DART/RMT Training	3
Lebanon RMT	4
Attention to Detailers	5
After Action Analysis	5
IAS Update	6
Wedding Bells	6

*"I appreciated the very  
practical nature of the course  
... it has direct relevance to  
our work in the Embassy, even  
where there is not a disaster."*

*~ Nick Hilgert, Ivory Coast  
MDRO*

OFDA held its first regional Mission Disaster Preparedness training August 16 - 18, 2006, in Dakar, Senegal. Christine Leonardo, the DASP's Mission Disaster Preparedness Coordinator, worked closely with OFDA's West Africa Regional Advisors and Disaster Operations Specialist to prepare and facilitate the training.

Twenty seven Mission Disaster Relief Officers (MDROs) representing seventeen countries in West and North Africa attended. The MDRO is appointed by the Chief of Mission and is the Embassy's focal point for disaster-related information, planning, and activities affecting the host country.

The objectives of the training were to familiarize MDROs with USG disaster response

options, the resources and capabilities of OFDA, and the appropriate procedures for accessing these resources; to orient MDROs to the guidelines for developing the Embassy's Mission Disaster Relief Plan (MDRP); and finally, to provide MDROs with the knowledge and tools to successfully respond to an emergency involving the host population.

A variety of case studies from the region were used to illustrate response options and demonstrate potential challenges and solutions. Participants also met with a variety of disaster relief partners, including representatives from non-governmental organizations and the United Nations. MDROs were given a chance to apply what they learned by preparing a draft MDRP, identifying country-specific hazards and vulnerabilities, exploring potential disaster relief partners, and discussing local capacities.

MDROs made brief country presentations on the status of their MDRP and plans for completion. A lively discussion ensued, providing a platform for information sharing and exchange. Participants left with a better understanding of

the issues facing the region and a solid support network.

Senegal's Deputy Chief of Mission Robert Jackson addressed the group at the closing ceremony. He encouraged MDROs to share information from the training with others at their post, emphasizing that preparedness is everyone's responsibility.

Many of the MDROs who attended the workshop have already put their new skills into practice. Burkina Faso experienced flooding in early August and the MDROs issued a disaster alert cable. The MDROs from The Gambia began tracking information about the effect of renewed violence in Senegal's Casamance Region on The Gambia with Principal Regional Advisor Regina Davis. MDROs from Ivory Coast and Niger coordinated with OFDA on disaster declarations for a toxic waste spill and flooding, respectively.

Although the Regional Advisors for West and North Africa had already cultivated strong relationships with the MDROs in the region, we believe that the workshop helped to cement these relationships and build a better understanding and appreciation for OFDA's work.





*Gary Barrett meets with affected populations in Darfur.*

## DART Board: Darfur Field Office

Conflict in the western region of Darfur entered its third year, despite a peace agreement between the Government of National Unity (GNU) and one faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement, signed in May 2006. Fighting persisted in 2006, displacing hundreds of thousands of civilians and preventing the return of others. The complex emergency has affected more than 3.8 million people, including 1.9 million internally

displaced persons (IDPs), and approximately 220,000 refugees in eastern Chad. In eastern Sudan, the GNU and the National Front opposition group began peace negotiations.

From August 9 – September 26, DASP's Gary Barrett served as acting Team Leader for the USAID/DCHA Darfur Field Office (DFO), working on a number of critical issues faced by the humanitarian community in Darfur.

Insecurity in the region is currently a major concern. Gary facilitated a series of contingency planning workshops to help USAID implementing partners explore ways to serve beneficiaries and increase their own protective measures during periods of heightened insecurity. Gary also proposed communications systems for the guest house and field offices, which could save OFDA up to \$100,000 per year.

## RMT Policy: A Roadmap for the Future

The DASP has completed a draft revision of OFDA's Response Management Team (RMT) Policy and Procedures. The drafts include significant changes based on consultation with OFDA staff and SMT, and seek to:

- Address lessons learned captured during OFDA's after action reviews;
- Clarify the relationship between the RMT & DART;
- Harmonize the RMT system with OFDA's day-to-day approach to business operations; and
- Further refine the RMT system based upon the principles of the National Incident Management System (NIMS), including the domestic Incident Command System (ICS), which is the command and management component of NIMS.

A primary change is the restructuring of the RMT's functional sections and supporting organizational units. Notably, the RMT will now include a Deputy Manager for Planning (with oversight on plans, information, programs and coordination) and a Deputy Manager for Operations (with oversight on administration, logistics, communications & records, and safety & security). Other significant updates include:

- Response guidelines that apply to both DARTs and RMTs;
- Guidelines on activation, including who decides when to activate a DART or RMT;
- Revised operating procedures, including daily communications between the DART and RMT; and
- The creation of standard procedures for all functions.

The documents will be circulated to OFDA staff for review and feedback during the first quarter of FY 2007. Edits will be incorporated prior to December 2007, when the on-call RMT will use the new structure for the first time. Once approved, the new policy and procedures will serve as a roadmap for OFDA operations for years to come.



*"A good plan is like a road map:*

*It shows the final destination and usually the best way to get there."*

*~ H. Stanley Judd*

## Participant Workbook Enhances Efficiency

The DASP continues to refine the DART/RMT Essentials Course based on feedback from participants, instructors and the OFDA Training Unit. The most recent training took place from July 18 – 21, and was attended by 21 participants. Of those, six were OFDA staff and contractors, five were USAID colleagues, five

were L.A. County and Fairfax County Fire and Rescue, and three were from the Department of State.

The July course featured a new participant workbook. By consolidating the handouts and background materials normally distributed to participants throughout the

four-day training course, the workbook minimized confusion, streamlined instructions, and helped participants stay organized and on-task. As one evaluation affirmed, the course included “(g)ood teaching techniques and training materials, and the handbook was very useful.”



*“I learned a lot (and) look forward to serving on a DART or RMT.”*

*~ DART/RMT Participant*

## DASP Brings DART/RMT Message to DCHA

In early July, DASP Training Coordinator Gary Barrett delivered a briefing to nearly forty staff members from the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) Office for Conflict Mitigation and Management

(CMM). The briefing focused on the roles of the DART and RMT.

The CMM group was very interested in the various modalities that DCHA/OFDA employs to respond to disasters worldwide, and expressed interest in providing assistance

when DARTs and RMTs are activated. CMM planned to follow up with OFDA's Training Unit to explore options for additional training related to OFDA's systems and procedures.

## New Training to Enhance Surge Staffing

The DASP has spent time in recent months evaluating how well we are able to respond to OFDA's surge staffing requirements, and how well we prepare prospective detailers for OFDA assignments. Based on that analysis, DASP received approval to change the DART/RMT training for Forest Service (FS) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) employees in an effort to:

- Improve outreach to domestic agencies to reach a larger and more diverse pool of FS and BLM employees;
- Attract more skilled detailers, and ensure a higher level of availability within the cadre;
- Improve detailer readiness by

reducing the amount of time between DART/RMT training and an actual detail assignment; and

- Improve training for FS/BLM employees by increasing their exposure to USAID/OFDA colleagues and other professionals in the humanitarian assistance field.

To meet these objectives, DASP will condense the existing 5-day DART/RMT Training into a shorter 2-day orientation session that can be planned and facilitated by 2 DASP core staff members. The new format will be held more frequently at more locations throughout the US.

After prospective detailers have completed orientation, they will

obtain a security clearance. The DASP then will bring them to Washington, DC to participate in the USAID/OFDA Orientation and DART/RMT Essentials training. During the week in Washington, detailers will be able to interact with OFDA colleagues to learn more about their programs. After completing the Washington-based training, prospective detailers will be added to the active detailer cadre and will be available for OFDA assignments immediately.

The DASP is now refining the curriculum and investigating potential sites for the new 2-day orientation. Two orientations are tentatively planned for the spring of 2007. Please contact Scott Hocklander at (202) 712-0746 for more information.

## FOG Distribution Tally Nears 3,000

In the last quarter of fiscal year 2006, 394 FOGs were distributed to various individuals and groups in and out of USAID.

The vast majority of those distributed (288) went to participants in various Joint Humanitarian Operations Courses (JHOCs), which are facilitated by OFDA's Operations Liaison Unit and Training Unit for counterparts

within the Department of Defense (DOD). State Diplomatic Security placed a distant second but registered a respectable 55 requested and received. The Center for Excellence took the last podium position receiving an even dozen.

The most notable single copy went to Secretary Guttierrez from the Department of Commerce during his visit to

the OFDA Operations Center. Groups that received more modest numbers included the 4th Civil Affairs Group, the Defense Intelligence Agency, the DART/Pakistan, and the South Africa USAR & UNDAC Representatives.

Nearly 3,000 copies of the FOG version 4.0 have been distributed since the manual's debut earlier this calendar year.

## Lebanon RMT Benefits from DASP Support

On July 25, U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon Jeffrey Feltman declared a humanitarian emergency in Lebanon due to insecurity and humanitarian needs related to the recent conflict between Israeli Defense Forces and Hezbollah in southern Lebanon and parts of Beirut. U.S. President George W. Bush authorized \$230 million in USG humanitarian and reconstruction assistance for

persons affected by conflict in Lebanon.

On July 23, a USAID/OFDA Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) arrived in the region to coordinate and prioritize USG assistance. During the height of the emergency, a Washington, D.C.-based Response Management Team (RMT) supported the DART.

Two DASP core staff members served on the RMT during its activation, providing support to OFDA's relief efforts in the region. Christine Leonardo served as the Communications and Records Coordinator (CRC) from July 20 – 31, and Scott Hocklander served as the Logistics Coordinator from July 31 – September 1.



*Local populations process wild foods in Niger.*

## Niger: Case Study of a Slow Onset Disaster

Most OFDA staff members are familiar with the Gujarat timeline that was developed by the OFDA Training Unit. It illustrates an example of an OFDA response to a rapid onset disaster, the magnitude 7.7 earthquake which occurred in Gujarat, India on January 26, 2001. The timeline is a valuable training tool that is used widely to help newcomers better understand OFDA's response

options and what a disaster response might entail.

The SWAN Team and DASP piloted a new timeline exercise during the Mission Preparedness Training in West Africa to demonstrate how a slow onset disaster might unfold. The 2005 Complex Emergency in Niger was featured. The Niger response included a RMT and a DART, and employed various

response options including commodity flights and grants. The response demonstrated good coordination with various partners including the MDRO and Embassy, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations.

The case study does not aim to instruct participants on the details of the Niger response, but rather demonstrates a range of issues that could apply to any OFDA response.



## Attention to Detailers: Recent Assignments

- Laura Chapman (1/30 – 12/31) is serving a long-term detail updating the National Response Plan and the RMT Policy Guidelines and Procedures.
- Ron Libby (5/21 – 8/4) completed his assignment in Ethiopia where he was deployed as a field officer.
- Tom Frey (7/16 – 7/27) and Bruce Keleman (7/17 – 7/28) provided ICS expertise to the DASP during the revision of the RMT Policy Guidelines and Procedures.
- Tom Frey (9/9 – 9/16) served as a technical consultant to the OLU for a conference in Germany.
- Christine Leonardo (7/20 – 7/31) served on the Lebanon RMT as the C&RC.
- Scott Hocklander (7/25 – 7/30) worked in the Logistics Unit and (7/31 – 9/1) served on the Lebanon RMT as the Logistics Coordinator.
- Garry Barrett (8/7 – 9/26) served as the Team Leader for the Darfur Field Office.
- Barry Gall (9/6 – 10/13) is currently working in the Logistics Unit as a Logistics Specialist.
- Paolo Paqueo is working with the FST and the DASP on their respective databases.



## After Actions: Common Themes Emerge

During the quarter, DASP completed and SMT approved reports for two after action workshops held earlier this year. The first report focused on the complex emergency/food security disaster in Ethiopia (May – September 2005); the second report focused on programming issues related to the complex emergency response in Darfur, Sudan. Both reports were brief, focusing on action items that emerged from the lessons learned process.

DASP has completed a number of after action workshops and associated reports during FY 2006, and common themes have emerged. Many of these themes pertain to staffing issues, and the systems that OFDA uses to staff DARTs. DASP has consolidated a these themes into a summary report, which was submitted to IRG consultant John Acree as part of his surge staffing

analysis for the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA). These themes included:

### **A lack of clarity about how staffing decisions are made.**

After actions reviews often conclude that team selections are based on personalities rather than systems. Staff members sent to the field may not have the skills and training to perform the task at hand. Transparent communication may continue to be a problem throughout the response. Staff members do not know how to build their own skills to become better positioned to deploy on DARTs because skill-based qualifications are not clear.

**A lack of staffing for core functions, such as administration, communications and some technical disciplines; and A lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities.** OFDA often

underestimates the need for dedicated staff in specific core functions, sending generalists such as Field Officers to fill complex functional roles. Generalists often are not informed that they will need to perform roles such as logistics, administration, communications, and they may not be trained or qualified. This has resulted in misunderstandings and miscommunications between the field and Washington.

Recommendations to address these themes include ensuring that all DART functions are covered; exploring a standing DART rotation for core functions; ensuring a depth of personnel resources in all core functions; and building and enforcing a system of competencies and qualifications for staff deployed on DARTs. The DASP will explore these recommendations during FY 2007, and aims to propose some potential solutions.



*Working group participants at the South Asia earthquake after action workshop discuss issues and recommendations.*

**US Forest Service  
International Programs  
DASP**

1099 14<sup>th</sup> Street, NW  
Suite 5500W  
Washington, DC 20005

**Phone**  
(202) 273-4729

**E-mail**  
DASP@usaid.gov

## White House to Review IAS Concept

In recent months, DASP has worked closely with the Field Support Team (FST) to spearhead the development of a concept of operations for interagency collaboration in receiving and requesting foreign assistance during a domestic disaster response.

During this quarter, the document received final interagency clearances and was submitted to the White House for review. Ultimately, it will become a component of the National Response Plan (NRP).

As a part of this effort, DASP is currently helping the FST to develop procedures for identifying international search and rescue teams and bringing them to the United States to assist when domestic disaster responders are overwhelmed.

## Wedding Bells for Yolanda Yeldell

The DASP is pleased to announce the wedding of Program Associate Yolanda Richardson who married Mr. Edward Yeldell on August 12, 2006. The DASP would like to reintroduce Yolanda Yeldell, who can be reached at

[yyeldell@fs.fed.us](mailto:yyeldell@fs.fed.us) or  
[yrichardson@ofda.gov](mailto:yrichardson@ofda.gov).

Yolanda's office phone number will remain unchanged. The DASP wishes Yolanda and Edward many happy years of wedded bliss.



**US FOREST SERVICE  
INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMS**  
1099 14<sup>TH</sup> STREET, NW  
SUITE 5500W  
WASHINGTON, DC 20005



**USAID/DCHA/OFDA**  
1300 PENNSYLVANIA AVE, NW  
WASHINGTON, DC 20523

---

**We're on the Web!**  
*See us at:*  
[www.fs.fed.us/global](http://www.fs.fed.us/global)

---